



KEVIN L. FAULCONER

MAYOR

July 05, 2017

The Honorable Alan I. Baskin
Foreman
Grand Jury
County of San Diego
550 Corporate Center
550 West C Street, Suite 860
San Diego, CA 92101

Re: 2016/2017 San Diego County Grand Jury Report: "Broken Garbage Cans, City Apathy, Free Cans For A Few – What a Mess"

Dear Foreman Baskin:

This letter is the formal response to the above-referenced Grand Jury report's Findings 03 through 07 and the Recommendations 17-14 through 17-17, which are specific to the Mayor.

FINDINGS 01 THROUGH 07:

Below are the Mayor's responses to findings 01 through 07:

Finding 03: *A majority of black refuse bins now in use in the City of San Diego are damaged and should be replaced.*

Response: Partially Disagree.

As of March 23, 2017 the average age of a refuse (black) container in service in the City of San Diego is 13 years. Of the approximately 343,600 refuse containers in use, 233,700, or 68%, are beyond their industry standard 10-year useful life. The City has no information on how many of the refuse containers currently in service are damaged. Residents are required to replace damaged refuse containers that are no longer serviceable with City-approved replacement containers. See attached Waste Management Regulation C-010-14.

Finding 04: *The City of San Diego fails to select the best refuse collection equipment and bins by simply choosing to select the least expensive.*

Response: Disagree.



The City of San Diego has a comprehensive list of specifications that refuse collection vehicle equipment providers must meet in order to be eligible for consideration in the procurement process. Vehicle specifications from the City of San Diego's Invitation to Bid (ITB 10057689-15-R) for Automated Refuse Packers cover 54 components such as: performance specifications to assure that 1200 to 1400 daily service stops on varying inclines can be serviced; legal payload capacity; turbocharged engine; fuel type; muffler system meeting California code for noise; fuel tank capacity; radiator; hoses; transmission; front and rear axle suspension; turning radius; and laptop computer and diagnostics system.

Similarly, residential refuse bins providers must meet stringent specifications in order to be considered. The current City contract for refuse bins is a cooperative procurement agreement that allows the City of San Diego to maximize its purchasing power while ensuring that quality containers are purchased. See San Diego Municipal Code section 22.3208(c). Refuse bin specifications cover 50 specific mandatory components, including: design requirements; capacity; physical dimensions; wall thickness; lid specifications; plastic material; color; ultraviolet stabilization; wheel and axel assembly; tubular metal; fasteners; container construction; finish and identification markings. The bins must comply with the American National Standards Institute for shape and performance plus other minimum requirements, including: minimum service life; compatibility with collection vehicles; load capability; container durability; weather resistance; chemical resistance; stability and maneuverability; lid performance; reparability; maintenance requirements; manufacturing requirements; container performance warranty; and delivery quality assurance and control.

The City's current vendors for refuse collection vehicles and refuse bins meet or exceed all of the minimum specifications under their respective contracts.

Finding 05: *The City of San Diego needs to improve the maintenance and repair of aging refuse collection vehicles and lift arms.*

Response: Agree.

During the FY 2016 adopted budget the Fleet Operations Department added 24 positions to support all aspects of the maintenance and repair services and to enhance customer service and vehicle availability (decreasing vehicle down-time). In FY 2016, the Fleet Department's staff vacancies was approximately 20%. As of May 2017 vacancies in the Department were approximately 12%. This reduction in vacancies represents an increase of more than 40,000 additional labor hours over a 12 month period. As a result of the increased staffing and enhanced customer service, the daily vehicle availability has improved over the same time period from an average of 91% to 93.5% or higher. This improvement in percentage points is the equivalent to an increase of 110+ additional vehicles available daily.

Finding 06: *Repair and maintenance of automated refuse collection trucks is negatively impacted by having to share space and personnel dedicated to fire trucks.*

Response: Agree.

On April 18, 2017 the San Diego City Council passed Ordinance 20815 authorizing a long term lease at 7950, 8048-8050 Othello Avenue to accommodate the maintenance and repair of Fire Apparatus. Additionally, the City has dedicated \$6.5 million in estimated costs for the tenant improvements and building modifications in the FY 2018 Budget, which received final City Council approval in June, 2017. The Fleet Operations Department estimates operations can commence on the sale in early 2018.

Finding 07: *Not enough mechanics are assigned to repair and maintenance of automated refuse collection trucks.*

Response: Agree.

During the FY 2016 adopted budget the Fleet Operations Department added 24 positions to support all aspects of the maintenance and repair services and to enhance customer service and vehicle availability (decreasing vehicle down-time). In FY 2016, the Fleet Department's staff vacancies was approximately 20%. As of May 2017 vacancies in the Department were approximately 12%. This reduction in vacancies represents an increase of more than 40,000 additional labor hours over a 12 month period. As a result of the increased staffing and enhanced customer service, the daily vehicle availability has improved over the same time period from an average of 91% to 93.5% or higher. This improvement in percentage points is the equivalent to an increase of 110+ additional vehicles available daily.

RECOMMENDATIONS 17-14 THROUGH 17-17:

Recommendation 17-14:

Urge the Fleet Services Department to speed up the process of moving the Fire Vehicles repair facility out of the ESD Miramar Operations Center maintenance yard as soon as practical.

Response: The recommendation has been implemented.

On April 18, 2017 the San Diego City Council passed Ordinance 20815 authorizing a long term lease at 7950, 8048-8050 Othello Avenue to accommodate the maintenance and repair of Fire Apparatus. The City has dedicated \$6.5 million in estimated costs for the tenant improvements and building modifications in the FY 2018 Budget, which received final City Council approval in June, 2017. The Fleet Operations Department estimates operations can commence on the sale in early 2018.

Recommendations 17-15:

Advise the Environmental Services Department to develop specifications and procedures for the selection of more durable refuse collection bins.

Response: The recommendation will not be implemented because it is not warranted.

Specifications and procedures for the selection of durable refuse collection bins already exist. Current refuse bin specifications cover 50 specific components that must be met, including: design requirements; capacity; physical dimensions; wall thickness; lid specifications; plastic material; color; ultraviolet stabilization; wheel and axle assembly; tubular metal; fasteners; container construction; finish and identification markings. The bins must comply with ANSI standards for shape and

performance plus other minimum requirements, including: minimum service life; compatibility with collection vehicles; load capability; container durability; weather resistance; chemical resistance; stability and maneuverability; lid performance; reparability; maintenance requirements; manufacturing requirements; container performance warranty; and delivery quality assurance and control. With the current average age of refuse bins serviced by the City at 13 years, it is expected that the number of bins failing will increase. The bins have a useful life expectancy of 10 years, which is consistent with industry standards. Additionally, a bin's actual life expectancy may be negatively affected by exposure to direct sunlight and the types of contents placed in the bin.

Recommendation 17-16:

Urge the Fleet Services Department to improve repair and maintenance of automated refuse collection vehicles to limit the damage inflicted upon bins during the collection process.

Response: The recommendation has been implemented.

The City is maintaining the refuse collection vehicle (Packers) to the specifications, as outlined by the manufacturers; however, the City acknowledges that the vehicles are heavily used. The Packers are highly complex vehicles containing multipart electrical, mechanical, air and hydraulic systems. The Packers must be capable of handling heavy loads, transferring solids and liquids, and operating up to six days a week in all conditions throughout the City's 372 square miles. The arms that lift the bins are complex mechanisms containing numerous sensors, pins, bushings and pivots, and are calibrated to lift between 400 – 450 pounds. Below are a few statistics of an average Packer that help in quantifying the heavy use of the vehicles:

- 10 hours of operation daily
- 2,600 – 3,120 hours of operation annually
- 1,000 arm rotations per day
- 260,000 arm rotations annually
- 15,710 average annual miles

These factors contribute to refuse Packers requiring significant maintenance and repair on a continuous basis. As reported in a national industry publication, refuse packers require some of the highest repair and maintenance activities for public fleets.

In order to service these vehicles, every Fleet Operations Department technician requires numerous hours of hands on training as well as manufacturer training specific to these vehicles and their unique and complex systems.

As mentioned previously, approximately 68% of the refuse bins (black) are overaged, as of March 2017. The expected useful life of a bin is 10 years and the average of all active refuse bins (black) issued by the City of San Diego is 13 years. At 13 years of age a bin has been picked up by the automated arm from a Packer over 676 times. Failure of the bin after 10 years of age is within the expectations set by the manufacturer and, although damage may be caused by the arm, the age of the bin is most likely the primary underlying factor.

Recommendation 17-17:

Advise the Fleet Services Department to provide a sufficient number of experienced mechanics and other personnel, or contract with third party vendors to reduce the backlog and long delays in repairing automated collection vehicles.

Response: The recommendation has been implemented.

During the FY 2016 adopted budget the Fleet Operations Department added 24 positions to support all aspects of the maintenance and repair services and to enhance customer service and vehicle availability (decreasing vehicle down-time). In FY 2016, the Fleet Department's staff vacancies was approximately 20%. As of May 2017 vacancies in the Department were approximately 12%. This reduction in vacancies represents an increase of more than 40,000 additional labor hours over a 12 month period. As a result of the increased staffing and enhanced customer service, the daily vehicle availability has improved over the same time period from an average of 91% to 93.5% or higher. This improvement in percentage points is the equivalent to an increase of 110+ additional vehicles available daily.

The City and the Fleet Operations Department are committed to providing high quality customer service and is continually monitoring the performance of staff, analyzing operations, and will continue to train staff, make improvements and seek innovative solutions.

If you require additional information, or have any questions please do not hesitate to contact Marshall Anderson, Director of Council Affairs, at 619-235-5295.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Kevin L. Faulconer", with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Kevin L. Faulconer
Mayor

KLF:ma

cc: Honorable Jeffrey B. Barton, Presiding Judge, San Diego Superior Court
Honorable Myrtle Cole, City Council President
Andrea Tevlin, Independent Budget Analyst
Stacey LoMedico, Assistant Chief Operating Officer